

the job and thus urge you to oppose his nomination.

Thank you,
 FRED A. SORAH,
Debord, KY.
 WANDA BLEVINS,
Tuscaloosa, AL.

JUNE 10, 2006.

DEAR SENATOR KENNEDY AND SENATOR ROCKEFELLER: First, thank you for your leadership and persistence in bringing the MINER Act to reality. We hope it will prevent more needless deaths in the coal mine industry and will save other coal mining families from the grief we have suffered. Of course, there is still a lot to do to further miners' safety and health. We will continue to serve as advocates for miners, as we have already traveled to speak on the subject.

Our most immediate concern today is President Bush's nominee for Assistant Secretary of MSHA: Richard Stickler. Mr. Stickler comes out of a background in mine management. At first I thought this would be a good idea, but I fear he will be yet another "fox" charged with minding the henhouse. He will be more likely to pursue "compliance" rather than aggressive enforcement of the Mine Act, though enforcement is what's needed now more than ever. We need someone to stand up for the mining community, not go along with what ever seems to please the companies.

At his nomination hearing, Mr. Stickler failed to even recognize that there's any problem at MSHA or within the industry. How will he be able to fix and improve something he thinks has no problems. This lack of awareness was startling because his hearing was held on the heels of the deadliest season of coal mining in recent history. He offered no insights about what he would do if he were to become the head of MSHA, and he showed no signs of leadership.

When it passed the Mine Act nearly 30 years ago, Congress said that miners' health and safety are supposed to be the top priorities, and MSHA is charged with pursuing that mission. Mr. Stickler said nothing at his confirmation hearing that suggests he would serve as an aggressive advocate for miners' health and safety. However, miners deserve nothing less. We believe that Mr. Stickler is not the right person for the job and thus urge you to oppose his nomination. Please help us get someone to stand up for us and many other miners and their families.

Thank you very much for your time and I hope you consider my suggestion.

Sincerely,

AMBER DAWN HELMS.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate stands in recess until 3:30 p.m.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 2:34 p.m., recessed until 3:30 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. COLEMAN).

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR DEFENSE, THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR, AND HURRICANE RECOVERY, 2006—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the conference report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the

amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 4939) making emergency supplemental appropriations for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes, having met, have agreed that the House recede from its disagreement to the amendment of the Senate and agree to the same with an amendment, and the Senate agree to the same, signed by a majority of the conferees on the part of both Houses.

(The conference report is printed in the House proceedings of the RECORD of June 8, 2006.)

Mr. LAUTENBERG. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. LAUTENBERG are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

Mr. LAUTENBERG. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Florida is recognized.

(The remarks of Mr. NELSON of Florida are printed in the RECORD under "Morning Business.")

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, after a great deal of hard work by both bodies, I am pleased that the Senate now has under its consideration the conference report to accompany H.R. 4939, the fiscal year 2006 emergency supplemental appropriations bill.

Overall, this bill which was requested by the President has two major points of focus. First, it provides needed funding to replenish the spending accounts of the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and other agencies and departments of the Government engaged in the global war on terror through the remainder of this fiscal year. Second, this supplemental includes critical funding for continued efforts to address the damage caused by the hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico in 2005.

The bill was adopted by the Senate on May 4, and we began discussions with our colleagues from the other body shortly thereafter. A bipartisan majority of the conferees reconciled the differences between the two bills and reached agreement on the conference report on June 8. The House approved the conference report this morning by a rollcall vote of 351 to 67.

The conference agreement provides a total of \$94.519 billion. Of this amount, over \$70 billion is provided to carry out the global war on terror and to cover the expenses of ongoing operations and reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Title II of the conference agreement provides \$19.338 billion for hurricane-related damage and recovery costs. Title III provides \$500 million for agriculture disaster assistance to hurricane affected areas. Title IV includes \$2.3 billion for influenza pandemic preparation and response activities. Title V provides \$1.9 billion for various border security initiatives. Title VI includes \$27.6 million for the Architect of the Capitol to address health and safety concerns in the utility tunnels in the Capitol complex. Finally, title VII includes general provisions and technical corrections.

This conference agreement is the result of hard work and true compromise between the House and Senate. This bill provides critically needed funding to our troops in the field and it helps continue the recovery process on the gulf coast. The overall funding level meets the amount requested by the administration, and I hope this agreement will receive bipartisan support in the Senate.

All members have had the opportunity to review the conference agreement, and I am happy to respond to any questions Senators may have about its contents. I do hope we will not indulge in needless delay and proceed with some dispatch in the consideration and approval of this agreement.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARTINEZ). The Senator from Rhode Island.

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 10 minutes in morning business with respect to a tribute to Senator BYRD and then make another statement with respect to the conference report.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. REED are printed in today's RECORD under "Morning Business.")

Mr. REED. Mr. President, as indicated previously, I would like to make a short statement pertaining to the supplemental appropriations conference report before us.

It is interesting, my colleague from Florida spoke about the lessons of Hurricane Katrina. One of those lessons is we have to be prepared. In Rhode Island, we worked with Chairman COCHRAN, Ranking Member BYRD, and also with Senator HARRY REID to incorporate within the supplemental appropriations bill an appropriation to help prepare our hurricane barrier in Providence, RI. I thank the chairman, Senator BYRD, and Senator REID for this effort.

Unfortunately, this provision did not survive the conference committee, and we are not able today to tell the people of Rhode Island that we are giving

them much needed help to strengthen the Fox Point hurricane barrier.

The Fox Point hurricane barrier literally is the protection that will preserve Providence, RI, and the surrounding areas from a devastating hurricane. It protects the city. It protects all the key resources there, such as the infrastructure. It is right at the head of Narragansett Bay. That is where Providence sits, and in a hurricane, if it roars up that bay, there is not much to stop it except this barrier.

It was built in the 1960s. It was at that time a modern, state-of-the-art construction, but the years have intervened. It is no longer a state-of-the-art construction. It needs work. It needs the electro-mechanical system control system replaced. It is one of the few major facilities in the country that I think is still operated by its original electrical components. The barrier employs three 35-foot-high gates that are electronically operated. This is not only to keep the water out, but to make sure they can still continue to pump water from the rivers that back up the hurricane barrier.

Now, most people don't think Rhode Island is the prime target of hurricanes, but in 1938 and in 1954 we were dealt devastating blows. In fact, the damage from the hurricane in 1938 in those dollars was \$125 million. Today it would be \$1 billion. Hurricane Carol in 1954 flooded Providence, leaving the city under 8 feet of water and destroying 4,000 houses.

So we have a need to help the city upgrade these facilities to provide the kind of improved equipment and improved performance that will assure us that if a hurricane comes—and we all know that eventually they will come to Rhode Island and to the rest of the eastern seaboard—we will be prepared.

Again, I thank the chairman and others for their work to put the money in, and I am disappointed that the money was taken out. I hope that in the future we can find another way in which we can protect the people of Providence, RI, and the whole State of Rhode Island.

Mr. President, with that, I once again congratulate Senator BYRD, and I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. COBURN. Mr. President, I want to congratulate Senator BYRD as well. What a wonderful gentleman. What a gentle spirit, but what a firm voice. We value your service and we appreciate what you can teach us and what you have taught us.

I also want to thank Chairman COCHRAN for the hard work that he has done on this supplemental bill. He also has put up with a lot of grief from myself and others. The bill is important. I am going to spend a few minutes on things I think the American people ought to be asking about this bill.

The fact that we have the largest supplemental appropriations bill ever to come before this body to me is a

great problem. It tells me part of the system is broken. The fact that the administration would request such a large emergency appropriation, and the fact that we would pursue it and pass it tells us that the system of the true appropriations and authorizing process is broken.

We are in the fourth year—the third-and-a-half year—of a war, and a large portion of what is in this bill has been known in advance that we were going to need it and it should go through the regular order. The fact that we take it outside of the budget caps, the fact that we take it outside of the regular order when we know we are going to spend \$60 billion to \$70 billion at least in executing and prosecuting the war and put it in an emergency supplemental I think says a lot about our process that we need to take very seriously and try to change.

That is a criticism for the administration as well. A lot of the money in this is for the National Guard to refurbish and bring things up that we knew and in regular order we are going to be processing in the Defense appropriations bill that is going to be coming before this body in the next couple of months. So the excuse to say this is all emergency falls short, because it is not. It is not all emergency. We have known all of this money is going to be spent, it should have come through the regular process, and we really don't have a good excuse to tell the American people why we are not doing that.

The second criticism I have of this bill is that the administration requested no rescissions whatsoever. There is nothing in the Federal Government that we could trim to help pay for this emergency bill. That is the assumption of the request by the administration. I want to tell you that is the wrong assumption. Employees who work for the Federal Government, the valuable employees, they know that is not true. People outside of Washington know that is not true. Constituents all across this land know that if we had to find money and if we could drive things to make them more efficient, we could do it. The fact that we are not doing it is another problem with our process. That is not a criticism of individual Members of this body; it is a criticism of the process that we find ourselves in and that we are blinded in the forest by the trees.

We ought to be back to regular order, and if we truly have emergencies, we ought to look to say, How can we trim from somewhere else to pay for it? Because, in effect, this \$94.5 billion, my grandchildren, your grandchildren, and the generation that follows are going to pay for. Nobody that is working today is going to pay for this. We are transmitting the cost to our children and grandchildren. We are saying that we can't make an effort, or the administration doesn't request us to make an effort, or we don't make an effort to find other areas that are less important, lower on the obligation level for

us, that we will just print the money and sign the notes and sell them overseas and say, Children and grandchildren, you pay for this because we don't have the courage to do the hard work to pay for it. We ought to take that criticism and say, Is that really what we want to be known for? Do we want to be known for not making the hard choices that are necessary to fund this war and at the same time not take away opportunity from our children and grandchildren? That is not a personal criticism, but that is a legitimate criticism that the American people ought to be asking.

The third thing is there are things in this bill that are pure politics in nature. Let me just describe one. I withdrew this amendment on the floor, but I think the American people ought to understand what is going on. There is over \$200 million in this bill for Osprey aircraft, the V-22 that has never proven itself in combat. It has never made the test in battle simulation that says it is a viable option. Neither the administration nor the Defense Department requested this money, and this money is going to be spent, it is in the bill, and this bill is going to pass and the President is going to sign this bill. But we are going to spend money, a quarter of a billion dollars, on this program, not because it was requested by the Pentagon, not because it was requested by the administration, but because it was requested by a business to continue a program that hasn't proven itself yet.

There has to be some risk to those who don't perform when they are supplying our military with the latest in terms of equipment and materials, and there is not any, if we continue to do it this way. I am not an expert in the Defense appropriations process, but I have read what the Defense Subcommittee has said on this, and I have read what the articles have said on this, and it doesn't meet the test. Yet, we are going to spend it.

The reason we are going to spend it is because there are enough Members in this body that have employment with this company throughout the country that the pressure to not fund it is greater than the pressure to do what is right. I believe we ought to ask ourselves about the criticism of that. That is not a way to run the future of this country, and it is certainly not a way to protect the heritage for our children in giving them the opportunity that we have all experienced in being in the freest and greatest country in the world.

The risk for our country is a risk that we will lose that heritage of sacrifice today to create opportunity tomorrow. I know I am like a broken record to the appropriators, but my heart says that we should create at least the same opportunities in the future that we have all experienced, and to do less than that denies the very heritage that was given to us.

So I haven't decided for sure whether I am going to vote for this bill. I know

it is important to take care of the critical needs in the hurricane area. I have had two hearings on that, part of my subcommittee, the waste, fraud, and abuse associated with that. But I must emphasize, out of 37 hearings in the Federal Financial Management Oversight Committee, we found over \$200 billion—\$200 billion—of waste, fraud, and abuse in the last year and 2 months. Forty billion dollars of it in Medicaid in terms of false and inappropriate payments, \$46 billion in Medicare, and \$16 billion in Medicaid fraud in New York City alone. Yet we don't respond to it. There is no action on it.

We had the Pentagon in 2005 pay \$6 billion—\$6 billion—in performance payments to contractors who did not meet the performance requirements of their contract. Yet we paid it anyway. But we haven't had a prohibition on that.

I know on the Defense authorization as we get to that, Senator McCAIN is going to offer an amendment that I think is appropriate that we require that portion of the funding of the war that is legitimate to go through the appropriations process and regular order will be there. There are certain portions of that which are unexpected and we will continue to have to do supplementals to do that. But I would remind my colleagues that we are not going to be measured on what we do now; we are going to be measured on what is the opportunity for America 10 years from now and 15 years from now.

We were sent here to make the hard choices, and they are not fun. But we are not making the hard choices, because we are not looking at the programs that aren't effective, that aren't accomplishing the goals and eliminating them to pay for the things that we think are; we are just ignoring them and paying as we go, except we are not paying as we go. We are asking our children and grandchildren to pay.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from West Virginia.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, I want to thank the very able Senator who has just spoken for his service to the Nation and to this body. I thank the very able chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Senator THAD COCHRAN, for all of his meticulous—meticulous—work on this bill.

The President asked the Congress to approve \$92.2 billion of emergency spending and \$2.3 billion to combat pandemic flu. When the committee opened its hearings on the supplemental on March 7, I stated my belief that it is our duty—our duty—to scrutinize the President's request, not only for what is in it, but also for what is not in it.

The conference report that is before us includes \$65.7 billion for the Department of Defense to fund the wars—and there are two of them going on—two wars: the war in Iraq, to which I was opposed, and I feel I was right, and in Afghanistan, which I supported; I support that war, and I supported that war

from the beginning in Afghanistan—an amount said to be sufficient to prosecute those wars and supply our troops.

Upon passage of this legislation, the total amount appropriated for the war in Iraq, including the cost of reconstruction, will be \$318 billion—\$318 billion. That is \$318 for every minute that has passed—every minute—\$318 for every minute since Jesus Christ, praise the Lord, was born. That is a lot of money. Mr. President, \$318 for every minute that has passed since Jesus Christ was born 2,000 years ago. That is a staggering figure. And what is even more unbelievable is that the monthly cost of this war in Iraq, which I have opposed from the beginning, has been steadily escalating from \$5 billion per month in 2004 to more than \$8 billion per month now.

The American people—hey, those people who are out there in the prairies, in the Rocky Mountains, in the lands between Washington, DC, and the Rocky Mountains—they are all asking: How on Earth has the monthly cost of the war in Iraq grown so much in just 2 years? The Bush administration announced that major combat operations ended in May of 2001. Remember that? The banner that we saw on the ship? Let me repeat. The Bush administration announced that major combat operations ended in May of 2003. But the costs of the war continue to spiral. How can that be? Why? Why? This administration does not want to answer these questions. Instead, the administration continues to request funds for these wars—two wars, Afghanistan and Iraq. The administration continues to request funds for the wars through ad hoc emergency supplemental appropriations bills.

Regrettably, the Congress continues to duck for cover. Since the President took us to war in Iraq in 2003, the Congress has approved eight different emergency supplemental appropriations measures to fund the wars—eight. None of those measures received the full scrutiny that is required of such massive expenditures. You know it. I know it. We know it. Everybody should know it. The President refuses to include the full costs of these wars in his regular budget request. Instead, he sends the Congress emergency requests with little or no detailed justification.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, this President has requested \$515 billion of emergency spending—yes, you heard me, \$515 billion of emergency spending that does not appear in the budget. This conference report includes language that I authored, urging the President to put the full costs of the wars in his annual budget. This is the fifth time the Congress has approved such a provision.

My amendment was approved 94 to 0. It is time for the President to get the message. The administration's failure to budget for the wars means that neither the White House nor the Congress is making the tough decisions about how to make the most of public funds to pay for the ongoing wars.

Tales of waste abound. Our troops deserve better treatment, as do you, the American people out there. I am pleased that the conference agreement includes \$35.6 million for improved mine safety and health programs. Since January of this year there have been 19 coal mining deaths in the State of West Virginia, and another 14 mining deaths in the States of Kentucky, Alabama, Maryland, and Utah. This conference report will ensure that an adequate number of safety inspectors will be provided for our Nation's mines and will expedite the introduction of critical safety equipment into the mines. These are critical dollars which will begin to fill the gaps, the unacceptable gaps at the Federal Mine Safety Agency. There are too few inspectors, there is too much out-of-date safety technology, there are too many unprepared rescue teams, and the litany of problems at the Federal Mine Safety Agency goes on while the lives of our Nation's coal miners continue to be at risk.

In the past 5 years at the Mine Safety Agency, safety has taken a back seat. At least 217 coal safety inspector jobs have been eliminated—wiped out. The political leadership at MSHA puts protecting miners' lives on the back burner.

We have a moral obligation to make our coal mines safer. This funding will jump-start the job of protecting our coal miners' lives and providing some peace of mind to the coal miners' families.

I know how those families feel. I grew up in a coal miner's home. My wife's father was a coal miner. You are looking at somebody who speaks the coal miner's language. I do. Coal mine safety should not take a back seat to coal production. Protecting the lives of our coal miners has to be job No. 1 in the mines.

I cannot find the words to adequately express my heartfelt appreciation for the support of Chairman THAD COCHRAN of Mississippi and the other Senate conferees, particularly Senator SPECTER and Senator HARKIN, for their cooperation. With this funding and with the recent approval of the mine safety authorization bill, Congress will have given clear, unmistakable direction to the administration. The safety of our coal mines and the brave miners who work in them must be paramount, upmost. I will say that once more. The safety of our coal mines and the brave miners, men and women, who work in the coal mines must be paramount.

With regard to funding required to recover from the gulf coast hurricanes, the chairman of our Senate Appropriations Committee took the bull by the horns. Under Senator THAD COCHRAN's leadership, the Senate added \$9.2 billion to the President's budget request to aid the victims of the hurricanes. In addition, the Senate added funds to meet pressing emergency needs for drought relief, port security, the security of U.S. borders, and much needed

medical care for the Nation's veterans. Sadly, the President, our President, threw down the gauntlet and threatened—yes, threatened—to veto the bill. The White House insisted that \$14 billion of what it called low-priority items be dropped from the bill. As a result, the Republican leadership of the House and Senate sat down with White House staff and agreed to drop from the bill emergency disaster drought relief for our farmers, funding for critical veterans' medical services, and funding for increased security at the U.S. ports. Over \$9 billion of critical funding for the victims of the hurricanes—over \$9 billion—has been eliminated, including housing assistance, education assistance, and transportation funds. Where are our priorities?

Instead, this administration has put its highest priority not on disaster needs but on massive tax cuts to the tune of \$254 billion for 2006, tax cuts—yes, hear me, tax cuts at a time when the Nation is at war and spending on that war is on the order of \$8 billion per month. That is like spending \$8 for every minute since Jesus Christ was born—\$8 for every 60 seconds since our Lord Jesus Christ was born.

The administration continues to have a huge credibility gap when it comes to homeland security. There is a continuing drumbeat that another terrorist attack is likely.

Yet once again the administration is trying to secure the homeland on the cheap.

The White House insisted that the conferees strip away \$648 million for port security and \$600 million for the Coast Guard from the bill. Take it out. The administration's speechwriters and the administration's policywriters seem to be living in different worlds.

How serious is the administration about port security when the administration decides to allow Dubai Ports World to operate six major U.S. ports before the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of Defense, and the Secretary of Homeland Security were made aware of the decision? Who is in charge? Who is in charge? What a fiasco.

How serious are we about port security when Customs inspects only 5 percent of the 11 million containers that come into the country each year? How serious are we about port security when the Coast Guard inspects only one-third of foreign ports that trade with the United States? Yet at the insistence of the White House—hear me now—at the insistence of the White House \$648 million for port security is eliminated—gone, gone with the wind.

With regard to border security, the administration continues to be a day late and a dollar short. They opposed my efforts—this little boy from the hills of West Virginia—yes. The administration continues to be a day late and a dollar short. They opposed my efforts last year to add funds for border security. How about that—your security, border security.

Fortunately, Chairman GREGG, the great Senator from New Hampshire—I like him. No, he is not a Democrat. What difference does that make? I like him.

Fortunately, Chairman GREGG and our House counterparts agreed—yes, that old boy from the mountains—agreed with me, and we now have 1,500 more Border Patrol agents. We now have 1,500 more Border Patrol agents and 581 more immigration investigators and agents, and 1,950 more detention beds.

On May 18, 3 weeks after the Senate adopted the comprehensive Gregg-Byrd border security amendment, the White House sent up its own border security package. Rather than following our lead—Senator GREGG and Senator BYRD—the White House insisted on reducing the package for the Department of Homeland Security by \$728 million—that isn't chicken feed—and narrowing the focus to just the Southwest border.

While some may view border security through a microscope, Chairman JUDD GREGG and I share the view that when the border is tightened in one place, the threat will move elsewhere. We should anticipate that inevitable dynamic so that our border enforcement agencies will have the tools to effectively do their jobs when they need those tools, not 2 or 3 years from now. Yet the President requested no funds—no funds, none—for the Coast Guard and no funds—none—for the northern border.

Just few days ago, 17 alleged terrorists were apprehended in Toronto, Canada. This ought to have served as a wake-up call to all of us that the threat to this country is not only on our Southwest border but on all of our borders.

Regrettably, the President had his way in conference. While I appreciate that we have another \$1.2 billion for border security, I worry that the funds are not based on a sound plan for border security.

In conference, Chairman THAD COCHRAN offered an amendment to establish a limit on discretionary spending for fiscal year 2007. He did so to expedite the consideration of the appropriations measure through the Senate in the absence of a final budget resolution. Chairman THAD COCHRAN and I share the goal of debating in the Senate and sending to the President 12 individual, fiscally responsible appropriations bills.

I support setting clear, enforceable limits on the spending contained in the appropriations bills. The issue is: At what level should we cap spending? Chairman THAD COCHRAN presented to the conference a deeming resolution that would limit spending to \$872.8 billion, the level proposed by the President.

Once again, the President's budget represents an irresponsible plan that trades America's long-term future for short-term political gain. If the Congress approves the President's request

for Defense and Homeland Security, the President's budget will fall \$14 billion short of what is needed for domestic programs, just to keep pace with inflation.

The President proposes the largest cut to education funding in the 26-year history of the Education Department, \$2.1 billion or a 4 percent reduction. This is a nonsensical squandering of the future of our children.

How are we going to compete in the global marketplace unless our young people have the tools they need?

Although we have thousands of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, the President wants to collect \$795 million in new or increased fees charged to whom? To our veterans to pay for whose health care? Their health care. He also proposes \$800 million of additional fees for the health care of military retirees. What a way to say thank you to our dedicated troops.

The President proposes a level of funding for Amtrak that will force it into bankruptcy. The logic behind that decision totally escapes me. With gas prices soaring, why would we want to eliminate a major provider of public transportation?

At a time when we are facing record energy prices, our President is also proposing a \$1.4 billion cut in funds for Low-Income Home Energy Assistance. What a farce.

Despite the fact that the White House continues to raise the specter of another terrorist attack, the President proposes to cut first responder grants by 25 percent. The President proposes to cut fire grants by 55 percent. These are just more examples of budgeting in a closet.

This week the FBI announced that in 2005 this country had the largest increase in violent crime in 15 years. And yet the President proposes to cut grants for State and local law enforcement by over \$1.2 billion.

So may I say that while our President talks a good game on investing in alternative energy supplies, his budget includes only half of the funds necessary to implement the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

To complicate matters even more, the President has proposed that the Appropriations Committees approve \$7.4 billion of new user fees and changes in mandatory law, most of which are not even under the jurisdiction of the committees. For example, the President wants us to approve a \$1.2 billion increase in the ticket tax charged airline passengers. At a time when the airlines are already facing financial difficulties, this is folly, pure folly. If there is one lesson that we should have learned from Hurricane Katrina, it is that there are consequences to starving Federal agencies. FEMA, which performed marvelously after the Northridge earthquake, the Midwest floods, and the 9/11 attacks, FEMA was no longer up to the task when Hurricane Katrina hit.

After 5 years of starving domestic agencies, I wonder which other agencies will be the next FEMA. Will it be the Coast Guard? Will it be the Food and Drug Administration's ability to approve safe drugs or the ability of the Food Safety and Inspection Service to protect food supplies?

I offered an amendment in conference to modify the amendment offered by Chairman COCHRAN to increase discretionary spending for fiscal year 2007. One of the amendments was adopted on a bipartisan vote of 15-13 to increase spending by \$7 billion.

Sadly, the White House and the House majority leader objected to the inclusion of the deeming resolution as modified by my bipartisan amendment. The conference report that is before the Senate, therefore, limits total discretionary spending to the President's stingy—too stingy—\$872.8 billion request.

At this funding level, the Senate will have little choice but to starve Federal agencies of the resources they need to responsibly meet the needs of the American people. That means relegating people's needs to the bottom of the barrel.

The White House got what it wanted in this conference report. Less money for the victims of the hurricane, less money for drought relief, less money for key border security programs, no money for port security, and a "cheap Charlie" limit on other domestic spending.

The President has just made a surprise visit to Baghdad.

Let me say that again. Today, a little while ago, the President made a surprise visit to Baghdad. That is all right. Supporting our troops is very important. However, I have to ask, when will the President be visiting American ports to determine if they are safe?

When will the President visit American farms that have been devastated by drought?

When will the President meet with our Governors, our mayors, our police chiefs to understand why violent crime is on the rise?

When will the President visit our Nation's hospitals to learn why health care in this country is unaffordable?

When will the President visit our Nation's campuses to learn why the cost of a college education has grown 57 percent during his administration, while the level of Pell grants has been frozen for 5 years?

When will he start to look and listen to the voices of American citizens who want a leader for their future here at home?

We now have appropriated \$318 billion for the war in Iraq while America's needs go begging. I wonder if the President will ever ask himself about the consequences of that choice.

While I have serious reservations about what has been dropped from the conference report, the conference report that is before the Senate provides

essential resources for our troops and help for hurricane relief. Therefore, I will support the adoption of the conference report.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ALEXANDER). The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. COLEMAN. Mr. President, I rise to speak about the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act which, as the venerable and esteemed Senator from West Virginia stated, provides critical funding for America's troops, money for hurricane recovery, money for mine safety, while staying within the \$94.5 billion funding level called for by the President.

I am going to support this package. I support our troops. I applaud their efforts. I am a strong proponent of fiscal responsibility, and I understand and recognize the tough choices that needed to be made in order to put this supplemental together. But with that said, a large component of this package is disaster assistance. When it comes to helping our fellow Americans through a crisis, we need to assist all with equal zeal.

The fact is, while this bill offers some Americans a helping hand, it gives some others a cold shoulder. While this bill provides needed funding for agricultural disaster assistance in the gulf to producers affected by the hurricanes, it will not send a dime to Minnesota's farmers struggling to survive their own natural disaster.

The Senate bill contained that helping hand. Chairman COCHRAN fought for—and has fought a number of times, by the way. And I thank the chairman for all the work he has done and all the work he has done on the supplemental and I certainly thank him for his sensitivity to the needs of Minnesota producers. I served with him when he was chairman of the Agriculture Committee before he became chairman of the Appropriations Committee. But this relief never made it through the conference. It is not in the final bill.

I find it incomprehensible, if not irresponsible, to provide weather-related disaster assistance for one region of the country while withholding it from another. At its core, this is an issue about equity for all regions that are suffering.

And to the thousands of Minnesotans whose very livelihood has been jeopardized and those losing their farms due to last year's disastrous weather, this bill is nothing short of cruel. The absence of this piece in the bill is nothing short of cruel.

The images from Minnesota in 2005 speak volumes, surreal images of a mounting storm that almost defies description. Once unleashed, these ominous clouds transformed into tornadoes and a devastating downpour. Imagine looking out your living room window and seeing the shadow of this storm, as shown in this picture, cast on a farm you have worked all your life to build—a farm you have seen through good

times and bad, from performing chores before school as a kid to managing the cash flow of a modern farming operation as an adult. These clouds must have brought great anxiety in their path.

But these families would not have to wait long to find out what this storm would bring as they sought shelter from the tornadoes and from the high winds as they found cover from the 15 inches of rain that fell in 1 single day.

When the sky cleared, this is the scene, as shown in this picture, victims of the storm found. These are the fields, carefully cultivated every year, that were the lifeblood of family farms. These fields, left in utter destruction, a source of great pride when covered by a healthy crop, became a source of great concern to producers who understood all too well that no amount of hard work and careful planning would undue the damage done to their fields.

For many farmers, their worst fears were confirmed. In the sugar sector alone, revenue was reduced by \$60 million in Minnesota in 2005, thanks to this natural disaster. In one county, crop loss exceeded \$52 million and farmers were prevented from planting over 90,000 acres, thanks to saturated fields.

Yet the real story cannot be told through statistics. I have met these farmers, and I have listened to their personal trials endured as a result of this catastrophic weather. I was up in Lake Bronson, MN, up in the northwest part of the State, Kittson County. I think the town has about 180 people. I was there on some other matters. In a town of about 180 people, farmers came from surrounding areas. One hundred farmers showed up to talk about what they have been through, to ask for my help in trying to protect this disaster assistance relief.

I looked at the faces of these men and women who are hard working—you could just kind of see that strength in their hands and in their faces—and I turned to one of my staff and said: This is why America won Two World Wars. These are people who have been there for our country time and again. And they were hurting.

Farmers are losing their operations, pure and simple. Some of these producers will not be coming back to the fields next year thanks to this storm. They are not just losing a business, many are also losing a family tradition.

America is losing something here. Thousands of farmers are struggling to figure out how they will make their cash flow work this year. It is easy for us to talk about terrible crop loss numbers in black and white figures on a page, but these numbers do not quite sum up the weight felt by the farmer who is anxiously wringing his ball cap in his hands as he surveys a barren field and wonders how he will convince the bank to give him one more season.

It may shock many Americans to learn these images behind me are not

from the gulf but, instead, that they describe the natural disaster that struck northern Minnesota in the spring of 2005. Even more shocking to Americans might be the fact that, of the millions of dollars in agriculture disaster aid in this emergency supplemental, none will go to these Minnesota farmers.

I traveled to the gulf so see the hurricane damage firsthand in order to fully understand what my fellow Americans who live far from my Minnesota home are suffering, and I have supported their cause in Congress. I do not know that any of my colleagues from the gulf have ventured to my part of the world to witness the dire situation going on in places like Kittson County—and, again, in size and scope what happened in the gulf is almost incomprehensible—but I urge us not to forget what is happening in other parts of the country. For the farmers impacted, this is their life, this is what they got. It is underwater. I invite my fellow Senators who are interested in meeting these farmers to come to Minnesota. And not just to Minnesota; I think this same scene would be replayed in North Dakota and South Dakota and probably replayed in Missouri and other parts of the country.

It is true that the suffering in the gulf is great. I have seen the tremendous damage, and I am committed to helping. But the burden experienced by the farmers I met in places such as Lake Bronson, MN, is also great. Congress should come to the aid of all Americans who find themselves victim of natural disaster and are left in financial peril and economic hardship too great for them to resolve on their own.

This is simply a matter of fairness. The agricultural disaster aid package that was included in the Senate version of this emergency supplemental appropriations bill—of which I coauthored that piece—was fair. It provided assistance to farmers afflicted by natural disasters regardless of region or the type of natural disaster. This is a simple matter of fairness.

What this conference report does is divide the Nation. If not excluded for regional reasons, then I suppose we are left with the conclusion that hurricanes are the only true natural disasters that deserve congressional attention. We all know that is false. And taxpayers know better. They deserve better. The fact this conference report does not provide one dollar for Minnesota's farmers is a true injustice.

I will vote in favor of this emergency supplemental bill because it provides critical funding for our troops. That is what it is about. I am going to be there for that. But I will come to the floor again and again and again to raise the issue of disaster assistance for Minnesota farmers and others in the region. And at every turn I will work to move this funding. I will not let this inequity stand.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I come to the floor this evening to talk about the supplemental bill before us. And I thank the Senator from Minnesota for his remarks on agricultural disaster spending. I agree with him how critical this is for his State, and for many others, including mine. And I was deeply disappointed that the administration opposed the Senate's agricultural assistance proposal that was in our bill.

Their letter to us said they opposed it on principle because the 2002 farm bill was designed, when combined with crop insurance, to eliminate the need for ad hoc disaster assistance. Unfortunately, that policy has really harmed us in many of our States. I hope to work with the Senator from Minnesota and others to make sure we recognize these disasters that occurred to our agricultural communities. And I, too, am deeply disappointed it is not part of the supplemental.

Mr. President, I do want to speak for a few minutes this afternoon about funding for the war in Iraq and hurricane recovery and other national priorities.

I want to share with my colleagues that I have three real concerns with the bill. First, really, is that it continues the charade we have had that this war be funded off-budget. And, second, this bill leaves out critical funding for areas such as veterans health care, port security, and emergency transportation assistance on the gulf coast.

Much of the progress we made on the Senate floor, through many hours of debate, was thrown out because of an arbitrary limit that was set by the President that is really going to hurt a lot of our communities.

Finally, I want to talk about how this bill improperly included a budget ceiling that is going to affect every single spending bill and many of the decisions we need to make in the coming months. I believe the supplemental is the wrong place to be enacting a budget that was never passed by this entire Senate. I want to talk about each of these concerns.

I will, like all of my colleagues, vote for this bill in the end because it is important that we provide the funding for our troops to carry out their mission as we have asked them to do and because, of course, it supports the recovery efforts along the gulf coast.

My first concern is that the administration keeps trying to fund this war outside of the regular budget process. Instead of including the money our troops need in the annual budget, they keep sending us supplemental emergency requests. This may seem like a very small issue, but it has two real large impacts. First, every dollar we spend through emergency funding adds a dollar to our national debt. With every supplemental, we are burdening our children and grandchildren with more debt. It used to be that emer-

gency spending bills were for emergencies, things we couldn't foresee such as natural disasters. The need for the funding for the war in Iraq is not a surprise. It is not like responding to an earthquake that no one could predict. We should not hand over to the President the final authority on what deserves emergency funding.

I hope my colleagues will join me in expressing concern about this because this administration's approach is going to burden future generations. I don't think we should hide the true cost of the war from the American public, which we do through this supplemental process.

Communities at home today are sacrificing because of the cuts that this administration and Congress have imposed on the annual budget. If the administration had to fund the war in the annual budget, those cuts at home would be a lot more painful. By funding the war off-budget, Republicans are hiding the true cost of the war and the real tradeoffs that we have to make because of it. I hope the administration will be honest with all of us about how much this war is costing and the investments that we are being denied at home because of the way this administration has chosen to fund the war.

I believe the administration should not have the sole authority to decide what is worthy of emergency funding and what is not because we do have emergencies in our backyard as well as overseas.

My second concern with this bill is that it leaves out many of the critical investments we fought to add right here on the Senate floor to the supplemental. Here in the Senate we worked very well on a bipartisan basis to make sure the bill funds priorities such as veterans health care. I commend Senator COCHRAN for his work in trying to get this bill through the Senate and working with all of us to make sure our needs were addressed. But, unfortunately, the President set an arbitrary limit for the size of this bill and said he wouldn't sign a bill that cost a penny more. What happened? The leadership rolled over, agreed to the President's limit, and now that is going to hurt our communities at home.

One of the groups of people it is going to hurt the most is America's veterans. In April, the Senate overwhelmingly passed the Murray-Akaka amendment to ensure that our veterans get the help they need. Our amendment had broad bipartisan support. We worked with Chairman HUTCHISON and others to make this funding emergency spending. But what happened? That amendment was removed from this bill. That is a huge setback for the men and women coming home from the war today and entering a VA system that is now overwhelmed and underfunded. This funding would have allowed us to provide soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with timely access to the health care they earned.

We know today that the VA is facing funding challenges. In March, the VA

themselves told us that they are seeing 38 percent more Iraqi war veterans than they budgeted for. In fiscal year 2006, the VA expected to provide medical care to 110,000. That number is now rumored to be nearly 170,000. In fact, the VA has treated 74,000 Iraq war veterans in the first quarter of this fiscal year alone. We are hearing that veterans have to wait over a year to get the specialty care they deserve. Some are waiting over 18 months to get their benefits. We have long waiting lists with thousands of names on them at our major VA hospitals. Recently, a VA official actually told us that long waiting lists make care for mental health and substance abuse virtually inaccessible.

I am frustrated that the funding we worked to get on the floor of the Senate for our veterans is no longer in the bill that is in front of us. I believe our veterans deserve better, and I hope that we address this issue again in the near future.

I also want to take some time to mention other investments that were removed from this bill to meet the President's arbitrary limit. I am the ranking member of the Transportation-Treasury subcommittee. I can tell my colleagues that some very important funding initiatives were left on the cutting room floor, initiatives that were sorely needed to help the residents of the gulf and to help that region's economy recover. Let me give an example.

The Senate-passed bill included \$200 million in emergency assistance for transit authorities in the gulf region. In prior supplemental appropriations bills, we have included \$2.75 billion for the Federal Aid Highway Emergency Relief Program, but there is no such companion program for transit agencies. So right now the principal transit agency in the city of New Orleans is operating on funding through a mission assignment from FEMA. But FEMA has made it clear that this funding support is going to expire at the end of this month. Without any additional Federal help, the very limited amount of bus service that is now being provided is going to be severely curtailed. In fact, I am told that as a result of the \$200 million being eliminated during the conference deliberations on this bill, the New Orleans transit authority is likely to be required to lay off between 300 and 450 employees. They are going to have to cut back their extremely limited service even more.

Prior to Katrina, New Orleans had about 62 separate bus routes. By next month, they may have to cut that back to 17. New Orleans is desperate to generate the economic activity that is going to allow this city to again stand on its own two feet. They need workers, including workers who depend on mass transit, to fill all kinds of jobs. Cutting off those transit routes is not going to help that city recover, and throwing bus drivers on an unemployment line is not going to help that city recover.

In Baton Rouge, city leaders are desperate for transit assistance to help them serve the thousands of Louisiana residents now relocated to that city. You can't just add bus service and commuter rail services and expect to cover that cost through the fare box. They have to be subsidized, just like transit services across the country. The city of Baton Rouge never budgeted for these subsidy costs. That city is struggling to provide city services all across the board. They just can't tax all of these new residents. In fact, some of them were left with just the clothes on their backs. I am deeply disappointed that this Congress acquiesced when President Bush chose to ignore all of those needs and draw a line in the sand saying he would veto any bill that exceeded his request.

Because of that demand, the conference was also required to eliminate funding items for the gulf that the President himself requested. Here is why. The President set a limit, and if we wanted to fund anything new that went beyond that limit, the money would have to come out of the investment he requested. And one of those requested items that got eliminated in this conference was a \$202 million request for HUD for tenant-based rental assistance. That funding was intended to serve some 44,000 families, including families who had received HUD support prior to Katrina, and homeless families. The bill that passed the Senate expanded the purpose of this money to include the reconstruction and repair of HUD projects in the afflicted region and to provide vouchers for about 4,500 needy citizens in the region, especially the disabled and homeless.

That provision received widespread support from numerous national organizations, such as AARP, the National Low Income Housing Coalition, American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, and Volunteers of America. But all that support didn't matter when it came to cutting billions of dollars out of the supplemental. The end result, the conference report now before the Senate eliminated every penny that the President requested and the Senate included for that activity.

My final concern with this bill is, as I said before, it includes a budget ceiling that is far different from the one that was passed in the Senate. That budget ceiling is going to tie our hands when we work to try to help our communities. This undermines the work we do on the Budget Committee to meet America's needs. I know this was done once before, but I am still very concerned about the precedent we are setting. About 12 weeks ago, the Senate adopted a budget resolution by the narrowest of margins, 51 to 49. That budget included more funding than the President's request. That is because from the floor we did our jobs as Senators. We offered a number of amendments. Some were accepted; some were not. Some were added during the floor on consideration of the resolution.

Here on the floor we adopted amendments to boost funding for Alzheimer's research, for cancer research, for low-income energy assistance, for homeland security, for mine safety, for land and water conservation, and we added funding to help recruit a larger Army to ease the burden on all of those who are now serving. Only after those amendments were adopted was the budget resolution found to be acceptable by the barest majority in the Senate.

Since that time, the conference committee has made no progress in reaching a final budget resolution for this year. It is this complete breakdown of the budget process that has now brought us to this point.

As Members of the Senate are aware, the budget resolution claims to do many things. But the most significant thing it does is impose a spending ceiling on the Appropriations Committee. Now that the Congress has failed to adopt a conference report on the budget, the decision was made to include a provision in this supplemental conference report we are now considering that imposes a new spending ceiling on the appropriations process. Never mind that there is no such provision in either the House or the Senate bill.

This emergency supplemental conference report now before us includes one small but extraordinarily meaningful paragraph that masks the fact that this Republican Congress has failed to enact a budget for the U.S. Government. Worse still, the ceiling that is included in this emergency supplemental bill is not the same one that was agreed to by the Senate when they barely passed a budget resolution 51 to 49. Instead, the ceiling that is included in this conference report is \$9 billion lower than the level the Senate adopted, and \$7 billion lower than the ceiling for fiscal year 2008. The ceiling that is included in this bill deliberately ignores the amendments that were adopted by this Senate back in March. So we are basically being presented with a spending ceiling that would wipe out the amendments that were adopted on the Senate floor and bring our ceiling right back down to the level recommended in the President's budget. The Senate already was presented with that ceiling in the resolution that was reported by the Budget Committee. But the Senate amended that proposal many times to add about \$16 billion in spending to it, and only then did they find 51 votes to pass it.

I am sorry the spending ceiling is now included in this bill. I don't think it belongs in an emergency supplemental bill for the war or for the needs of the people who live on the gulf coast.

I do want to acknowledge that Chairman COCHRAN notified us that he would seek to add the deeming resolution to the supplemental. The bottom line is that a new appropriations ceiling does not belong in this emergency supplemental. The Democratic Senators on

the Appropriations Committees want to enthusiastically support the appropriations bills that our committee is going to produce over the next several weeks and months. We want those bills to pass on a broad bipartisan basis. We want those bills to address the critical funding needs of the functions of our Government, whether it is health research or education or infrastructure investment or agriculture or the needs of our troops.

In reality, it is going to be hard enough to produce appropriations bills that are going to get broad bipartisan support at the levels we adopted back in March. It is going to be almost impossible to do so if we ignore the amendments adopted on the Senate floor and impose a spending ceiling that was not proposed by the President.

So I am very troubled by this bill. It used to do a much better job of meeting our priorities at home. But the President set a limit and the Republican Congress went along, and I think that is going to hurt the families that we represent.

I will vote for the emergency supplemental because our troops need the resources to do their jobs and the gulf coast needs our help. But I am really deeply disappointed at the missed opportunities that are represented in this bill. We can do better, and I hope we stop the political games and start determining the right direction. Frankly, our troops and our country and our future depend on it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader is recognized.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from New Hampshire be recognized immediately following my remarks.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

COURTHOUSE SHOOTING IN RENO

Mr. REID. In Reno, NV, yesterday, a friend of mine, Chuck Weller, was shot in the chest. He is a family court judge. We have in Nevada district court judges that do everything but domestic relations and child custody and that kind of thing, which the family court judges like Judge Weller do. He was working at his desk and somebody shot him in the chest through a window. His condition has been recently changed from critical to serious. We think he is going to be OK.

This is a real tragedy for our system of justice. They have not apprehended the man who shot him. They believe they know who did it. We don't know if the man has killed anyone else, but it is a real tragedy.

Judge Weller is a person who does his very best to be fair and reasonable to those people who appear before him. When you deal with child custody matters, support matters, they are very personal, and a judge has a difficult time because there are intense feelings involved in divorce and child custody.

I am really concerned about his wife, Rosa Maria, and their two daughters.

They face difficult days ahead. Everyone in Nevada is grateful for Judge Weller's public service, and we stand with the family during these difficult days.

I think of the men and women in law enforcement in Nevada and around this country; they are the finest that we have. They are the ultimate first responders. I am confident that they will bring Judge Weller's attempted assassin to justice and in the process restore peace to the Reno community. People are concerned. This happened 24 hours ago or more. The man has still not been apprehended.

Judge Weller moved to Nevada in the early 1980s. He graduated from Georgetown School of Law in Washington, DC. He was elected to the Reno family court a couple years ago. During his election, he said he wanted to be a judge because "you can help a lot of people." He was right. Judges do help a lot of people. They make decisions that are very important, but they help us all by administering justice across the country.

We were reminded yesterday that sometimes judges need our help, particularly when it comes to protecting them from violence. It is an unfortunate fact that violence against judges, such as we saw in Reno yesterday, is not unique. It happens far too much.

Federal judges receive an average of 700 inappropriate communications or threats every year. State court judges, because there are so many more, receive thousands. There is no room in our country for violence, but certainly not in our courthouses. That is where Judge Weller was, in the courthouse. These are some of the most heinous crimes we experience, I believe.

But for the bravery of the men and women who serve on the bench in our courthouses, this violence undermines our entire system of justice. We can and must do everything we can to prevent these tragedies.

Judges like Chuck Weller, clerks, jurors, and others who are serving their country at courthouses and upholding the law must be free to do so without threats to their lives.

One of my valued employees, Darrel Thompson—a fine person—was called to jury duty in Washington, DC. He apologized and said, "I am sorry I cannot be at work today." I said, "Darrel, this is your obligation. I wish I could serve on a jury."

Mr. President, I have tried cases before more than a hundred juries. I told Darrel this is his civic duty. I feel that way so strongly that the system of justice must be administered without intemperance, without threats of violence.

In Reno, the city and county are in the process of determining what actions they can take to prevent incidents like this from occurring at the courthouse. One of the things they are going to try is to put a film on the window so you cannot see as well. One of the people said, "I don't think we can

afford bulletproof windows." That is up to local government. Certainly, we at the Federal level should do whatever we can to assist in the administration of justice all over the country.

I have contacted the county commissioner in Washoe County to extend my support in doing whatever we can do from here to prevent such tragedies. If we can give Federal assistance all around the country, then we should do that. Certainly, we cannot have things like this taking place.

A good place to start would be passing the court security bill, S. 1968. This was introduced last year by Senators SPECTER and LEAHY, the chairman and ranking member of the Judiciary Committee. I intend to offer—unless they do it—the text of that bill as an amendment to the next amendable bill on the Senate floor.

S. 1968 was introduced following a wave of violence against judges and their families in our country. A State court judge in Atlanta was killed by a criminal defendant. We also know that family members of a Federal judge in Chicago were killed by a deranged litigant. In the last 25 years, three Federal judges have been killed. Now Judge Weller, a State judge, has fallen victim. We are hopeful and confident that he will pull through.

The Specter-Leahy bill would improve protections for both Federal and State judges. For State courts like the Reno Family Court, the bill would authorize Federal grants to improve security. These Federal grants might be used to strengthen courthouse infrastructure, such as adding bulletproof windows, or it might be used to hire additional security personnel in the courthouse.

There are times when the Federal Government must step forward. One example, which is so important, is when the Federal Government stepped in to give rural police officers the money to buy bulletproof vests. Little counties in Nevada and other places simply could not afford them. They need bullet proof vests for protection. So there are things we can do to help in the administration of justice and police officers generally.

The Federal Government already plays a role in educating State court judges. I have played a role in helping to fund the National Judicial College and keep it funded. It is based in Reno. Judges, I am sure, from New Hampshire, Tennessee, North Dakota, judges from all over the country, have been to the State judicial college in Reno. It is a wonderful facility for training judges. It is now entirely appropriate for the Federal Government to bolster its support for protecting State court judges from physical harm.

The States will take the lead in protecting their own State court officers, but the Federal Government can and should help develop best practices and replicate successful security models around the country. Congress should take immediate steps to try to prevent

a recurrence of the Reno tragedy from occurring in other places.

I want to extend my thoughts and prayers once again to the Weller family that all will be well with Chuck. It is a difficult time for them and the entire Reno community. I ask everybody here to keep the Wellers in their thoughts, because this could be a judge in your State. But, in fact, it is in Nevada, and we are going to do everything we can to protect the administration of justice in our country. I appreciate very much the senior Senator from New Hampshire allowing me to speak before him.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that after I speak Senator DORGAN be recognized, and then that Senator VITTER be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise to speak a little about the supplemental appropriations bill, which is now pending. I want to begin by congratulating the Senator from Mississippi, Mr. COCHRAN, for the extraordinary job he did in producing this bill. When it left the Senate, it was around \$105 billion. It comes back to us from conference at \$94.2 billion or \$94.3 billion—I forget the exact number. It was not easy to bring it down from the Senate position to what was acceptable to the President and to the House. It was really a result of Senator COCHRAN simply saying that we are going to make these difficult decisions and we are going to have a bill that meets the conditions the President laid down for our spending responsibility. He deserves a great deal of congratulations and respect for having accomplished that.

Within the bill, he has included also an issue which I am interested in as chairman of the Budget Committee. It is what is called a “deeming resolution.” It sets the amount of money that can be spent on the discretionary side of the budget. That is those accounts that we appropriate, on which we spend every year, and which are automatic expenditures for things like education and some of the health care accounts and national defense are some of the big ones, as is homeland security.

This deeming resolution has set a number of \$873 billion, which I think is a very responsible number, which the President sent up in his budget, and the number the House had in their budget. It wasn't the number that left the Senate when we passed our budget. One of the Senators who spoke before me from the other side was upset that the number that passed the Senate was not included in the deeming resolution, which is a fairly ironic position for anybody to take since they voted against the budget as it left the Senate.

In any event, the deeming resolution as it is in this budget is the number

that was agreed to between the Republican leadership of the Senate and the House, and it was the number that the President felt was appropriate. It will be a difficult number to obtain, there is no question. It represents significant fiscal restraint. It is a clear marker that we are going to try to restrain the rate of growth of the discretionary side of the budget, which is critical to putting in place fiscal responsibility.

I think it is important for people to know that, yes, we presently have a very large deficit. But this deficit is coming down rather precipitously from where it was projected to be 6 months ago. It was projected that we would have a deficit of well over \$400 billion. We are projecting this year that it will be in the \$300 billion range. That is a very positive move in the right direction. Part of that move is a function of the fact that we have started to control the rate of growth of the Federal Government, independent of our needs relative to fighting the war on terrorism and Katrina, which are events that we need to simply spend money on because of the catastrophe of Katrina and because of the need to have our troops in the field and have what they need to be adequately supported.

Another reason the budget deficit has come down so much in the last few months is because our revenues are coming in as a result of the President putting into place, and the Republican Congress supporting the effort, economic policies which energized the economy dramatically—putting in place a tax policy that is fair to entrepreneurs and risk-takers in this country. We have seen people who are willing to go out and take risk, taking action that creates taxable events. Specifically, they have created new companies, created new economic activity and new jobs.

As a result of those things, revenues are jumping dramatically. We have seen the largest revenue increase in the last 40 years, I believe, in this last year; and the year before that, we saw a historic revenue increase. The Federal Government is back to essentially where they were, in a historical context, over the last 20 years as a percent of gross national product. Those revenues had dropped precipitously over the last 3 years because of the breaking or bursting of the Internet bubble and the attack of 9/11, which caused a recession.

So we are seeing the economy come back. We are seeing 5.3 percent growth, which is extraordinary. We are seeing a job situation where we have virtually full employment. According to the economists, when you get down to an unemployment level below 5 percent, you are basically talking about full employment. We have seen this as a result of this expansion of the economy that has now been going on for 39 straight months, or something like that. We have seen a huge jump in revenues, and the effective result of that is that the deficit is coming down also.

In fact, if you were to take out the cost of fighting the war against terrorism and the cost of paying for the Katrina tragedy, we would essentially be functioning on what would be statistically considered to be almost a balanced budget.

We would be at a historic low relative to the deficit as a percentage of the gross national product over the last 20 years. So we are moving in the right direction. By putting in place this deeming resolution 873, we are asserting we are going to be aggressive to try to control the rate of growth on the discretionary side. That is all positive and good, and it largely comes about because we have very strong leadership on the Appropriations Committee through Chairman COCHRAN and his commitment to fiscal discipline.

Another issue I wish to talk about and put the issue in the correct context so people understand what is actually happening is the issue of border security because there has been a lot of confusion as to how much money we are spending on border security, where we are spending it, and what it is being spent on.

I have the good fortune of chairing the Homeland Security Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee. As chairman of that subcommittee, I suggested we put in the supplemental as an emergency item—not as an emergency item, we paid for it—\$1.9 billion, the purpose of which would be to pay for capital items which were in dire need by Customs, the Border Patrol, and the Coast Guard. These are items such as airplanes—Customs is flying 20 or so P-3s, and they were all grounded a month ago because they are 40 years over their useful life and they have serious structural issues that have to be checked all the time or they have the potential of serious structural issues—new helicopters because the helicopters are 20 years past their useful life; new cars to be used on the border because the Border Patrol goes through cars rather rapidly because of the harshness of the terrain in which they have to use them; sensors; and unmanned vehicles. With the Coast Guard, it is fast boats to be used to make sure our shorelines are protected from people coming across who shouldn't be coming across and maybe want to do us harm.

These are all capital items. The reason I suggested we do capital items is because I didn't want to create an out-year cost which we couldn't afford to pay for under the present budget system, but I did want to take off the table items I knew we were going to spend money on if we were going to have an effective Border Patrol, to have an effective Customs agency, and to have an effective Coast Guard.

The White House looked at that number and said they really didn't want to do that. Instead, they shifted over and said: Let's do operational items, and they decided to take, of that \$1.9 billion, about \$800 million and spend it putting the National Guard on the border, and the balance of the money they

basically used to project the hiring of new people and the addition of beds for detention, both of which I support, but both of which create certain issues, and that is what I want to talk about briefly—the issues created by the supplemental and what will occur in the followup appropriations bills of Homeland Security so everybody knows the playing field that is being defined.

The practical effect of this supplemental is, yes, there will be money in place to hire an additional 1,000 agents. We already had money in the pipeline to hire an additional 1,500 agents this year. It takes about 40,000 applications before you can get 1,000 agents. It is not easy to hire them. Then you have to train them, and you have to have a physical facility to train them, which we have in New Mexico. But that facility doesn't have the capacity to train 2,500 agents a year; maybe 2,000 but not 2,500. It is unlikely we can hire an additional 1,000 agents before the end of this fiscal year—maybe 300 or 400, maybe even 500. But I will agree that by putting the money in now, we accelerate what we planned to do next year, which is to hire another 2,000 agents. So we are accelerating that event, if that is the goal.

Secondly, the proposal basically prefunds bedspace which should be funded and creates an outyear cost as a result of that and does a series of other operational things and actually some capital items with which I totally agree, such as technology investment and unmanned vehicle investment.

But the practical effect of doing it this way is we create what is known as a budget tail or an expense in the outyear which we are going to have to pick up, and that is the point I wanted to make today in as factual a way as I can because it is a very big issue we are going to have to deal with as a Congress, and that is this: The President sent up a budget proposal for next year, 2007, which was essentially \$32 billion, rounded up. That request had an assumption of 1,500 new agents, 1,500 new agents we put in this year would be paid for, and then an additional assumption of another 1,500 agents, I believe, on top of that for next year.

It also had in it a request that part of the money, the \$32 billion, be paid for by raising the airline fee which people pay as a tax when they get on an airplane basically to fund the increase in the border security activity, primarily with the Border Patrol agent expansion, of \$1.2 billion. That proposal of \$1.2 billion had been sent up 2 years ago, and it was rejected out of hand. Why? Because the chairman of the authorizing committee, in what I think is a fairly legitimate view of the issue, said: You shouldn't be raising the tax of people getting on airplanes for the purpose of protecting the borders. The airplane tax should go to TSA and FAA and things which are used to make air transportation safer, but it shouldn't tax the airline transportation industry, specifically the passengers, to fund border activity.

When it was sent up again this year, it was basically dead on arrival, which the administration knew it would be. It wasn't a surprise because they had gone through this before. Actually, what they sent up was a request for about \$32 billion in spending but funding for about \$30.8 billion in spending, which means there was a \$1.2 billion gap. That will be difficult to fill in, in and of itself, were that the only problem. But in order to fill that, basically Senator COCHRAN, as chairman of the full committee, is going to have to take it from some other committee to give it to my Homeland Security Subcommittee to pick up that \$1.2 billion, if he is generous to do that or believes it is the right policy. He will have to take it from somebody else. I assure you, whomever he takes it from is not going to be all that appreciative of having lost \$1.2 billion.

That would be a major hurdle to begin with. Now throw on top of that \$1.2 billion shortfall the fact that in this bill, they have forward-funded 1,000 agents plus a lot of other operational expenses, and they have not funded the Coast Guard costs of what is called their fast boat or the expansion of their coastal protection efforts. They have taken the \$600 million we intended to use to do that and spent it on the National Guard. And we have created approximately—the number fluctuates on what one deems to be capital and doesn't deem to be capital. My guess is we are somewhere in the range of \$1.4 billion in operational expenditures which are now put in the pipeline which are not funded for the year 2007.

In addition, the administration tells us—and I would agree with this if we could do it—in the 2008 budget, they are going to ask for 3,500 new agents so that we can ramp up as quickly as possible to the ultimate goal, which is 20,000 agents. It is possible by the 2008 period that we will have the training facilities at a position where we can hire 3,500 agents. It is also possible that we could get 100,000 applications or 120,000 applications or so, whatever it would take to get 3,500 people. So that is a possibility. But the implications of that are significant in the form of cost.

What does this put at risk? All these costs have been put in the pipeline in a manner which is basically upfronting operational costs but not taking off the table capital needs. The practical implications of the \$1.2 billion, if it is not found by Senator COCHRAN—and I am not asking him to. I think if the administration is going to take this position, if they are going to make their bed, they ought to be asked to sleep in it.

If Senator COCHRAN cannot find that \$1.2 billion, the practical effect is we could not maintain the funding for the 1,000 agents that have just been put in the supplemental. We also could not add the new 1,500 agents we would need in order to fund what we expected to do in the 2007 bill. We would have to re-

duce technology and science and sensor technology by about \$100 million. We would have to limit infrastructure construction, especially fence construction, by about \$100 million. We would have to reduce detention expansion capability by about 6,700 beds.

We would have to reduce fugitive operations, where we try to find these people and get them out of the country, by about \$60 million. We would be unable to forward-fund the effort to get the IDENT and the EFIS systems to communicate with each other for the purpose of a U.S. visit, which is absolutely critical. That is where you come across the border, and they fingerprint you. They take two fingerprints of you. By taking 2 fingerprints of you, they can't communicate with the FBI database which has all the criminals in it because that database requires 10 fingerprints. So essentially we are limiting our capacity to figure out who is coming across the border as it relates to the FBI database. There is a protocol where they try to get the worst people and make it work, but the fact is, we have tens of thousands of fingerprints that are not able to be adequately vetted. That would have to be put off. The need to come up with a card with biotics attached to it so we could have a tamperproof identification system would probably have to be put off because we couldn't pay for that. That is a big one.

These items would have to be put off, plus the Coast Guard—and this really frustrates me—the Coast Guard, in order to build out the fleet they need—and they are functioning under old boats, a lot of old boats, and they have helicopters which are not properly structured, many of them, most of them, the vast majority of them are not armed—build out program to get things right and get positioned correctly to protect our coastline, instead of being completed in 2015, which was our goal under our supplemental request, will end up being completed in 2023 or 2024 and cost more money to do it because of the spread out.

So we are facing a lot of very serious issues as to what we will be able to fund and how much we will be able to fund under the present game plan or blueprint as it is set out for this year and next year as a result of this supplemental.

I thought it was important to come down to the Chamber and try to lay out the specifics because at some point, we are going to have to face up to the reality that there is a disconnect between what is being proposed and what is being paid for. This is not going to work.

Mr. President, as chairman of the Budget Committee, I regularly comment on Appropriations bills that are brought to the Senate for consideration and present the fiscal comparisons and budgetary data. Because of its importance, I will also follow that practice for the pending conference report.

The conference report to accompany the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2006, H.R. 4939, provides \$94.430 billion in budget authority and \$24.327 billion in outlays in fiscal year 2006 for contingency operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the global war on terrorism; relief from Hurricane Katrina; other emergency assistance; border security; and avian flu. Of these totals, there are no mandatory funds included. \$143 million in outlays in the conference report are not designated emergency; these outlays will count against the discretionary allocation for regular appropriations for fiscal year 2006.

The budget authority in the conference report is within the level of the President's request of February 16, 2006, when adjusted for avian flu. It is also \$14.468 billion less than the Senate-passed bill, which clearly demonstrates significant progress in conference with respect to conforming the measure to the initial request.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a table displaying the Budget Committee's estimate of the bill be inserted in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

H.R. 4939, EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT FOR DEFENSE, THE GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR, AND HURRICANE RECOVERY, 2006

[Fiscal year 2006, \$ millions]

President's request: ¹	
Budget authority	92,221
Outlays	23,626
<i>Conference report:</i>	
<i>General purpose</i>	
Total spending:	
Budget authority	94,430
Outlays	24,327
Emergency:	
Budget authority	94,541
Outlays	24,184
Non-emergency:	
Budget authority	-111
Outlays	143
Remaining 302(a) allocation prior to enactment of supplemental:	
Budget authority	9,279
Outlays	4,365

¹The President's 2007 budget request included \$2.3 billion for avian flu; for comparison purposes the President's supplemental request adjusted for avian flu totals \$94.521 billion in budget authority.

Note.—Details may not add to totals due to rounding. Totals adjusted for consistency with scorekeeping conventions.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, the issues that have just been discussed by my colleague, and others as well, about fiscal discipline are very important issues. I would make the point that I don't think one can find fiscal discipline around here with a high-powered telescope. There is no fiscal discipline around here, unfortunately. In fact, the very bill we are debating at this point is appropriating something over \$90 billion, none of it paid for—none of it.

Emergency funding for defense, emergency funding for Hurricane

Katrina. We have done emergency funding for defense previously. We have done it again, we have done it again, we have done it again. We are now over the hundreds of billions of dollars, all in emergency funding, and we are pretending somehow we have some discipline. It is imperative for this Congress to begin thinking about what this means for our kids and grandkids.

The conference report before us is a conference report that falls short on this very specific area about which I am concerned. Let me mention another area first.

One of the things this bill does is fund a great deal of money for the Defense Department for money that has been consumed in Iraq and Afghanistan in prosecuting the war. It replenishes military accounts, and we are going to do that, we understand that. We have a responsibility. We cannot send American troops abroad and decide we are not going to fund that which they need to do their jobs. We understand that. It would be smarter if we paid for it all, by the way. It would make a great deal of sense if we decided to pay for this rather than charge it to the kids and grandkids. But here we are, once again.

One amendment that was stuck in the bill when it left the Senate was very simple. It was the determination of the Senate that we were not going to have permanent military bases in the country of Iraq, that we were not going to have permanent military basing in Iraq. The Senate agreed with that. My expectation is that we are in Iraq because we want to provide freedom for the Iraqi people, we want to deal with the insurgency, and at some point bring our troops home.

Saddam Hussein was found in a rat hole. He is now on trial. Perhaps he will be executed. The Iraqi people are rid of Saddam Hussein, who committed mayhem and murder on a grand scale. There are unbelievable numbers of skeletons of people who were murdered by Saddam Hussein who turned up in mass graves. So we are there. And we want the American troops to finish their mission and to be able to come home.

But the Senate had previously decided on this bill that we wanted not to have long-term military basing in Iraq. One of the reasons for that decision I think is the administration asked originally for \$1.1 billion to build a U.S. embassy in Iraq, which would be the largest embassy in the world: 1,200 employees and \$1.1 billion. So I regret that the provision dealing with a decision that we were not going to have a permanent military presence, military basing in Iraq was taken out in conference. That was a bipartisan decision by the Senate to put it in, and I regret it was taken out. Nonetheless, it was.

Let me describe just for a moment my concern about another significant part of this bill. I am happy to be supportive of the efforts to help the people in the gulf region who were devastated by the worst natural disaster to ever

hit this country. When Hurricane Katrina hit, people were displaced and people were killed, and it was devastating to be there, and devastating to watch, for that matter. I think this Congress very quickly said to those people in the gulf region, You are not alone and we want to help you. I come willingly and in an interested way to be a part of the people who say we want to help you.

But this piece of legislation that is now before us with respect to family farming—and that is what I want to talk about specifically—says something very unusual and very unfair. It says those farmers in the Gulf of Mexico who lost their crops due to a hurricane called Katrina are going to get some help. They are going to get some disaster relief. All the other farmers across this country who lost their crops: Sorry, you are out of luck.

The U.S. Senate included a provision that I authored in the Appropriations Committee that provided \$3.9 billion in disaster assistance for all farmers in this country who lost their crops due to a disaster. Let me just describe what happened around this country last year.

Last year around this country we had a whole series of things happen. We had serious drought, the third worst year for drought purposes in Illinois since 1895. We had the third driest year in well over a century. In Missouri, Iowa, Indiana, Arkansas: The worst drought since the 1980s. Oklahoma wildfires destroyed—burned—one out of every 100 acres. In North Dakota, this is an example of what the fields looked like. We had 1 million acres that could never be planted. It was never planted. One million acres was planted and washed away. We had farmers who had just dramatic amounts of rainfall. We had one farmer who received one-third of all of the yearly rainfall in one day; just washed everything away. This farmer lost everything.

Once again the U.S. Senate said: We are going to provide disaster help to farmers who lost their crops. It doesn't matter where they are. In the Gulf of Mexico? Yes. To a hurricane? Yes. But then when we got to conference, the President prevailed. The President said, I will veto this bill if it has disaster relief in it, and the Speaker of the House and the folks who march to that tune in the conference said: No, you can't have disaster relief; we will only allow disaster relief for gulf farmers who lost their crops.

So that is the way it came out of the conference. The folks who were burned out, the folks who dried out, the folks who were flooded, those farmers were left behind, once again. And it starts at the doorstep of the White House.

It was this President who came to North Dakota some long while ago and said to farmers: When you need me, I will be there. I will be there for you. Well, we needed him. He is the one who said, I will veto the legislation if you provide disaster relief for farmers. So

he was successful. They stripped the Senate provision out of the bill. When it came out of the Senate, it was a bipartisan provision. It was supported by the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. It was supported by the Senate conferees upon a motion of mine, once again, in the conference. I sat downstairs in this building at 1 o'clock in the morning. We fought for five hours to try to put this in conference, to keep the Senate provision in conference, and we lost.

Someone once said that common sense is genius dressed in work clothes. The question of common sense here is this: Why should we have a circumstance that we are going to legislate now with this conference report that says if you are a farmer in one part of the country and lost everything, you get a little help. If you are a farmer in the rest of the country, Sorry, Charlie, it is over; no help for you.

Rodney Nelson, who is a cowboy poet in North Dakota, wrote an op-ed piece once in the North Dakota papers, and he asked a question about farming. There aren't many people here who are farmers. We come wearing suits. We have nice, shined shoes. We do our work in white shirts. Nobody here is in farming. But the people out there living on the land, raising livestock, planting a seed, hoping they will grow a crop, hoping they will be able to harvest and go to the grain elevator, and perhaps make some money, and be able to carry over for spring planting the next year, those are America's heroes. Those family farmers struggle.

Rodney Nelson asked this question: What is it worth to a country to have a kid that knows how to plant a crop? What is it worth to a country to have a kid that knows how to fix machinery, how to hang a door, how to weld a seam, how to grease a combine, how to butcher a hog? What is it worth to a country to have a kid know how to feed a newborn calf out of a pail? What is it worth to a country to have kids that know all of these things? What is it worth to a country to have a kid know how to go out and work in bitter cold winters or hot summer sun? What is that worth to a country?

The only university that teaches all of those things is American family farming. It is out under the yard light on the family farm someplace. That is where they teach these courses. Carpentry, welding, mechanics, and horticulture, all of these things you learn on the family farms—agriculture, livestock.

Once again, the farmers who have had these fields and ended up having no crop, some of whom are now out of business, they will lose those farms because they can't go a year without income. The bank doesn't say, We are sorry about that. I will tell you what. We won't need our money from you. You just don't need to pay us.

Some of these farmers will have been gone by now. But we were trying to say

to them, You are not alone. We know you got hit really hard with torrential rain in North Dakota and drought in Missouri and Illinois. That is what the Senate was saying. The Republicans and Democrats here said that. And then we got to conference and the President and the House conferees led by the Speaker said: No way; we don't intend to do that.

We are not asking for the moon. This was just a little bit spilling from the barrel. We have talked about all of this money, billions and tens of billions and now hundreds of billions of dollars, all of which have gone through an Appropriations Committee, none of which has been paid for to deal with wars and all of these issues. I understand why we have to do this. What I don't understand is why we are not willing to do what we should do as a Nation to farmers last year who got hit with natural disasters and who lost everything.

I don't come to the floor to say that the people in the gulf shouldn't be helped. Of course they should. I don't come to the floor to say farmers who lost their crops in the gulf shouldn't be helped. Of course they should. I am the first to support them. But I do come to the floor of the Senate to say it is fundamentally unfair to decide there are a couple of classes of farmers who lost everything, and the first is a class that lost it to a natural event, a weather event that has a named called a hurricane.

My colleague, Senator DURBIN, suggested maybe our problem was that—since we had a weather event in June of last year that provided one-third annual rainfall in 24 hours and washed every seed out of the ground—maybe our problem was we didn't name it. They name hurricanes. They didn't name that torrential rain. Maybe if they had named it, then we would have a circumstance where the President and others would say, Let's treat everybody the same. If you got hurt, if you lost everything, we are here to help. That should have been the refrain from this Congress and should have been the refrain from the White House. Regrettably, it wasn't.

So, after working for months, after beginning in the Senate Appropriations Committee on a bipartisan basis, with the chairman of the committee and others, Senator BURNS from Montana and many others, after doing that, after coming from the floor of the Senate and defending it, getting it through the Senate and going to conference, we got stiffed. When I say "we," I am talking about people who lost everything out there that fully expected this Congress to do the right thing.

Regrettably, this conference report, while it does the right thing in some areas, in my judgment shortchanges a lot of farm families who had high hopes that this Congress would do the right thing for them.

So we will live to fight another day for fairness, but this conference report with respect to the way it treats fam-

ily farmers who suffered disasters last year certainly cannot be linked under the category of fairness, in my judgment.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CHAMBLISS). The Senator from Louisiana is recognized.

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, I stand in strong support of this supplemental appropriations bill. There are many, many very important reasons to support it, and certainly one is because of the essential support it gives all of our Armed Forces around the world, particularly with regard to the crucial fight in Iraq. That is an essential reason to support it. Certainly the important money it puts toward border security, and we must do so much more with regard to border security.

I stand first and foremost and primarily with a focus on the crucial challenge of hurricane recovery all along the gulf coast, including in my home State of Louisiana. I strongly and proudly support this bill because it is an enormous help, an enormous commitment at the Federal level of keeping true to President Bush's Jackson Square pledge to make sure we have a full and robust recovery on the gulf coast.

This hurricane experience has been surreal for so many, literally millions who lived through it, including me. And it hasn't just been Hurricane Katrina which, of course, devastated southeast Louisiana as well as Mississippi and parts of Alabama. It has been Hurricane Rita, too, which damaged, devastated south Acadiana and southwest Louisiana just a few weeks after Hurricane Katrina.

It has been quite an experience in terms of introducing me to my work in the Senate. I will never forget so many of the experiences I lived through and saw firsthand, obviously Hurricane Katrina hitting on August 29 and seeing the aftermath of that, the unbelievable devastation, particularly because of the levee breaches in the New Orleans area. After living there on the ground, working on those issues day in and day out, I finally returned to the Senate on September 13 and stood here on the floor and tried to communicate exactly what I saw, but it was difficult because, again, so many of those images were just so surreal, so outside the realm of anything I had experienced before.

Then, just a few weeks later, September 24, it was almost unbelievable, but it happened. We were socked by a second devastating Hurricane Rita that went into the Texas-Louisiana border area, but really affected the entire Louisiana coast because it came in at an angle from the southeast to the northwest, in that direction, pushing flood waters all up and down, east and west of the Louisiana coast, but of course particularly devastating southwest Louisiana and south Acadiana.

I remember in that entire period thinking many times, and I will be

happy to admit this, none too proudly, that this was heavy, heavy lifting in terms of my new job in the U.S. Senate. I remember on more than one occasion e-mailing my wife Wendy that this just seemed so tough a haul in terms of what we needed to do, including through Federal legislation, particularly as it was hitting when understandable concerns about spending at the Federal level were at an all-time high. I noted in several of those e-mails that it just seemed like a very, very tough haul.

After months and months of work and joining with so many others in the gulf coast and outside the gulf coast and all around the country, I am so delighted that we are really getting that job done in terms of this Federal support. What seemed like such an uphill battle so many months ago is finally coming together, in terms of very aggressive, very robust Federal help.

Let me make clear, that is not primarily because of my effort. That is not primarily because of the effort of the rest of the Louisiana delegation—which has been completely united and which has worked very hard, yes—but that is primarily because of the leadership of others and their efforts. So I primarily come to the floor today to say thank you to those leaders.

Of course, we have to start with President Bush, the President of the United States. On September 15 he stood in Jackson Square and addressed the Nation. I was there personally. I will never forget that moment. It was surreal, in some ways, because the entirety of the French Quarter was dark, uninhabited, but there we were in Jackson Square and the President was speaking to the Nation, making a firm commitment that New Orleans and Louisiana and the gulf coast wouldn't just come back but would be rebuilt smarter, better, stronger than ever.

This legislation keeps that pledge. It makes good on that promise, and it only is happening because of the President's strong leadership in this regard. So in all my thanks—and we have many people to thank—I want to start first and foremost with President Bush. He stated it unequivocally, boldly, strongly on September 15 in Jackson Square, and he has made good on that pledge and that promise. This legislation helps do exactly that.

I also want to specifically thank all my fellow Senators, particularly leaders in this regard such as Senator COCHRAN, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee. In the months following the tragedies of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, some of the most important work I participated in was getting fellow Senators, fellow Members of Congress, down to the devastated regions, allowing them to see the scope of the devastation firsthand. So many came and so many responded in terms of really getting it, really understanding exactly the unprecedented scope of this devastation. So I thank all my colleagues who did

that, all my colleagues who joined together in this enormously important boost for the gulf coast and for Louisiana.

Again, there are very many folks who worked hard on it, but none harder than the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator COCHRAN, himself, of course, from a devastated State. So I deeply and sincerely thank all those fellow Members of the Senate.

What is it that we have accomplished? It really is a lot from the Federal level: passing the funding, the support, the help we need on the gulf coast for our full recovery. I am proud and happy to say in all of this the Senate has led the way through the leadership of Senator COCHRAN and others, in terms of passing the levels of support we need. The Senate led the way, the Senate bill led the way in the conference committee.

Several categories are enormously important. First, in this bill \$4.2 billion for Louisiana of community development block grant funding. That is enormously important. It will complete a \$12 billion package for Louisiana primarily dedicated to homeowners, many of whom lost everything, and to housing needs. That is crucial in terms of revitalizing and rebuilding our community for the better.

Another absolutely crucial issue as a threshold concept is rebuilding the levees far better than before to give everyone in the region peace of mind that we will have adequate protection in the future. Again, in this bill, \$3.7 billion will go to the Corps of Engineers for their ongoing emergency levee repairs and reconstruction. Just as important is crucial authorization language that is necessary to allow them to get that work done immediately. Again, a crucial threshold issue. Nothing will happen in terms of a robust recovery in the New Orleans area without knowing that we will have the levees we need to give individuals, families, businesses real security in the future.

Other important categories—\$500 million for agricultural relief, focused on the gulf coast region where the devastation from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita happened. Again, I acknowledge Chairman COCHRAN, who kept that package in the bill—slimmed down, yes, but vitally important nonetheless—and preserved it in the conference committee negotiations. That was enormously important.

Similarly, fisheries, \$118 million for fisheries that were decimated all along the gulf coast, particularly in Louisiana and Mississippi, is another crucial component in the bill.

This is so important and is vital particularly when coupled with our earlier legislation, a big bill in December where we passed billions in December also in CDBG funds, in levee money, in health care—Medicare and Medicaid—in education, passing money that followed the evacuee child wherever that child went so we can pay for those extraordinary needs, and in higher edu-

cation, in extraordinary help for local government where the tax base was decimated for the foreseeable future, jurisdictions such as Saint Bernard's, the sheriff's office, local government, the city of New Orleans, and others.

Also, crucial legislation in December on the tax side of the equation—GO Zone legislation—to provide powerful incentives for businesses, families, and individuals to come back and rebuild and bring the jobs with them to revitalize our economy because that is at the core of our recovery as well.

I say thank you to the President of the United States, to all of my Senate colleagues, to all who worked on this crucially important legislation. I say it with every piece of sincerity and heartfeltness in my body because this has just been a matter of survival, of life and death for all of us in Louisiana.

The most important way I can say thank you is in continuing to work with folks on the ground in Louisiana to assure all of you, to assure the President of the United States, to assure the American people, that this money gets spent right on the ground; that it is not just thrown at a problem but actually helps fund positive change and reform on the ground in Louisiana because that is exactly the leadership we need to move in the direction we need to take.

As we turn our attention to how that money is spent on the ground, I assure you I will be an active participant in that work, an active player in that debate. I will continue to use all of my leadership skills, everything I can muster, to make sure, again, that this enormous Federal support that everyone here—the President and others—has made possible goes to fund positive change and reform on the ground in Louisiana. We certainly need it in a whole host of categories: political reform, levee board reform, health care restructuring, educational improvement through charter schools, and the like, and on and on.

That is my pledge to my colleagues. That is, perhaps, the best way I can continue to say thank you for this vitally important help that will mean New Orleans, LA, including southwest Louisiana, decimated so hard by Rita, the entire gulf coast comes back—but also comes back better, stronger than ever.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I have come to the floor to try to bring a sense of urgency to the Senate about getting this conference report finally approved. The House has approved it. The conference report has been duly approved by a majority of the Appropriations Committee. The distinguished chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Senator THAD COCHRAN, is here now. I, as chairman of the Defense Subcommittee, want to point out that this supplemental was received by the Senate on February 17, and it is now June 13.

The Army has notified us of the need, and we have approved reprogramming of \$1.4 billion to carry the Army through June. The difficulty is that we are now informed, despite the circumstances of the reprogramming, the Army, at the end of June, will have only \$300 million left in its O&M account. The O&M account is the money to pay bills for any of the departments, and I think as we look at this, Members of the Senate should realize all over the country there are actions being taken now to the detriment of many of our bases, our ports, and various installations even here at home, here in the United States.

But the main thing is that the Chief of Staff of the Army, GEN Peter Schoomaker, has asked Chairman COCHRAN, on May 17, to do his best to accelerate the approval of this bill because almost half of the money that is in this supplemental appropriations bill is for the Army. I don't think there are many Senators who realize that every time there is a reprogramming it involves a real change in the overall structure of the Army. They must take money from various accounts and reprogram it into the operation and maintenance account in order to meet current bills—not only current bills here at home but in the war zone.

Very clearly, the impact of this is being felt, as I said, all over the country. For instance, I received notice from Fort Greely, in Alaska—that is the national missile defense base—that there have been a series of layoffs now at that small fort due to the program that the Army has had to undertake. I have before me the instructions that were given by GEN Dick Cody, the Vice Chief of Staff. He gave it to all general officers on May 26; that is, he has given instructions—really a command to the Army—to reduce spending while ensuring that life, health, and safety issues are covered. The priority is to continue critical support to ongoing operations and readiness activities for units and personnel identified—and that meant with regard to rotation concepts. But with the exception of those concepts, General Cody has commanded that the bases—and this was beginning May 26—not order noncritical spare parts or supplies.

He advised the Army Materiel Command to reduce the purchases and to postpone and cancel all nonessential travel and training conferences and to stop the shipments of goods unless necessary to support deployed forces and units with identified deployment dates.

What I am trying to tell the Senate is that right now, beginning on June 15, here are the orders starting 2 days from now: Release all temporary civilian employees funded with O&M accounts or performing O&M fund work. That includes depot operations. Freeze all contract awards and new task orders on existing contracts. Process solicitation of new contracts only up to the point of award. Suspend the use of all Government purchase cards. And if

this bill is not approved by June 26, beginning June 26 release service-contracted employees to include recruiters, if doing so will not carry penalties and termination costs.

General Cody has advised there may be other painful actions necessary if they don't get these funds.

I think this is a critical situation right now. The impact of not getting these funds now really causes duplicate actions. They not only have to seek reprogramming for transfer of the funds from other accounts to O&M, but then when they get these funds they will have to have authority to reprogram the funds from this account back into the accounts from which they are taken. This really causes enormous manpower problems in the Department of the Army handling situations like this.

I have come to plead with the Senate, let's settle the disputes on this bill. The bill is final now, in terms of the conference report. It is not subject to amendment. I can tell every Member of the Senate, the longer this bill is delayed the more people are going to be laid off in every State of the Union. It doesn't make any sense at all to delay getting this bill to the President. It is ready, it is overdue, and it is time we realized there are substantial costs to the military, when we know they have a crisis that requires supplemental appropriations, not to get the bill approved and to the President as soon as possible.

I plead with the leadership, I plead with both sides, let's approve this conference report and get it to the President tomorrow. In doing so, it will prevent that list of items I just mentioned that will occur starting June 15 because I am assured the President will sign the bill as quickly as possible after Congress has approved it and the Senate will take final action on this bill.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished Senator from Alaska for his comments. He is insightful. He is experienced. He understands the implications that would flow from the failure of the Senate to act promptly in approving this conference report. He is chairman of the Defense appropriations subcommittee. He has previously served as chairman of the full committee. He has had a wide range of experience in the military service himself during World War II. I think we should listen to him and we should act in accordance with his suggestions and recommendations. I hope the Senate will not prolong this debate unnecessarily.

Everybody has a right to be heard. Everybody has a right to express their views. But the opportunity is now. Let's finish talking about this bill this evening and let's vote on it the first thing in the morning—whenever it is the pleasure of the leader for us to do

so. I commend him and thank him for his strong leadership.

Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be dispensed with.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise today to state that I will vote for the emergency supplemental conference report that is before us, and I will do so without hesitation. I expect that most of my colleagues will also join in that vote. We will vote in that way because we know our brave men and women in uniform are currently in harm's way. They are in harm's way, and they need the resources this bill provides for them to move forward.

I also strongly support the hurricane relief and the reconstruction element of this conference report. Those funds are very much needed to address the urgent issues we are facing in the gulf coast and the reconstruction of that area from the disaster which was caused by Hurricane Katrina.

I appreciate the leadership of Chairman COCHRAN and the rest of the delegation from the Gulf Coast States that has brought this matter to the urgent attention of the American Nation. But I also rise to express my disappointment in what is not in this conference report and to help give voice with my colleagues to the millions of farmers, ranchers, and rural communities where needs have not been met in this report.

I am disappointed with the prevailing attitude in our Nation's Capital for the men and women who produce an abundant supply of the safest and highest quality food in the world. This bill is literally leaving them out to dry.

Last year, a bipartisan group of Senators recognized the dire situation that was facing our Nation's farmers and ranchers. We introduced the Emergency Agricultural Disaster Assistance Act of 2006. That bill would provide \$3.9 billion in emergency disaster assistance for farmers and ranchers who suffered losses due to natural disasters. This was an excellent piece of legislation which could have only been written by a consensus, hard work, and a bipartisan approach. We are all extremely proud that the Senate included both provisions in the emergency supplemental but in part because it included this assistance for farmers and ranchers. And there was a Presidential veto that came on the bill we passed out of the Senate. Because these provisions were stripped from the supplemental bill, our rural communities will suffer an unnecessary wrong.

I stand with the farmers and ranchers of rural America today because I recognize that this problem we face today in rural America will not go away. It will not simply disappear when the Senate

stands adjourned until the final vote on this emergency supplemental.

As I travel across Colorado, I hear from farmers and ranchers who have been consistently hit by disaster emergency after disaster emergency. With the rising cost of fuel and other interest costs, this problem can and will only get worse.

The 2005 winter wheat crop in Colorado was the fifth below-average crop in 6 years, with potential losses for producers of \$50 million in my State alone in 2005. Corn producers are reporting that their crops will be 20 percent below average. Sugar beet growers in my State of Colorado will see a decline of almost 50 percent. Farm fuel has increased 79 percent from where it was in September of 2004. It cost \$2.60 a gallon in September 2005. It was \$1.40 in December 2004, and we expect it will probably be higher this September of 2006. One of my constituents, a farmer in Kit Carson County, a very rural and very remote place in the eastern plains of Colorado, estimated that he will need an additional \$46,000 to cover the increased cost of fuel alone this year.

I have often heard here on this Senate floor that rural America is "the forgotten America." I very much agree with that characterization of rural America. The conference committee, faced with the looming threat of a Presidential veto and pushed by House leadership which is out of touch with rural constituencies, abandoned this opportunity for a renewed commitment to rural America.

I will join with my colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, in making sure we do not abandon rural America. I will continue to stand with the hard-working folks of rural America and with my colleagues who understand the hardships that are faced in more than 50 percent of the counties of our great State.

The drought in my State of Colorado has not miraculously ended in 2006. It continues. Flooding and other natural disasters are still affecting producers across the country. Therefore, my colleagues and I will be back, and again we will push for agricultural disaster assistance to ensure that our farmers and ranchers in rural communities have a real voice here in Washington, DC.

I am also deeply disappointed that a small but very important amendment I authored—an amendment that was accepted by the Senate—was stripped in conference. That provision would have increased the funds available to deal with the wildfire season which is upon us right now and particularly to address the hazards presented by the massive infestation of beetles that has turned vast swaths of our forests into swaths of dry fuel for wildfires.

There was never any doubt in my mind or in the minds of the people of the West that this was, in fact, an emergency situation we face. There was never any doubt that these resources were needed—and they are needed at this time.

Try to imagine how painful it is for communities to brace themselves for the worst when they have approved mitigation plans that are simply sitting on the shelf just waiting for resources so they can be implemented and wood fuel can be safely removed. We had an opportunity to help ease this pain and to do it in this supplemental. Now that opportunity has passed us by.

I was heartened when my Senate colleagues joined in support of the amendment, just as I am so disappointed that it is not finally included in the conference report before us. When across our State the fires start burning during this summer, I will again remind my colleagues that we had a chance to avert this disaster and to address this emergency we know exists, and again we were not able to do so. But on this point, too, I will not give up. I do not believe our Senate should give up. We should keep fighting to address the urgent threat and the underlying causes of the tremendously dangerous wildfire situation in which Colorado communities and communities across America find themselves. That truly is a disaster emergency we face.

Finally, I regret that almost \$650 million in funding for important port security programs included in the Senate-passed version was left out of this conference report. Those funds would have been used to pay for new imaging machines to allow inspectors to look inside cargo containers as they arrive in American ports, to add Customs inspectors at dozens of foreign ports, and to place more U.S. Coast Guard inspectors at foreign and domestic ports. These should be high priorities, especially given the bipartisan concern about foreign ownership of U.S. ports and the fact that port inspectors currently check less than 5 percent—that is less than 5 percent—of the more than 11 million containers that enter American ports every year. As a cosponsor of the Greenlane Maritime Cargo Act, a bipartisan bill to shore up our port security system, I regret the action that has been produced by this conference report, stripping it of the \$650 million we included in the bill for port security.

In conclusion, I will vote for the emergency supplemental because it is before the Senate and we must make sure we are reconstructing the gulf coast and supporting our men and women in uniform. However, the supplemental emergency conference report is flawed because it does not do what it should be doing for farmers and ranchers who have been dealing with disaster emergencies, and it does not take care of the looming fire emergency we will face across America over the summer months.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, we are happy to have an indication of support for the conference report from the distinguished Senator from Colorado.

I, too, join him in regretting we could not do more for the agricultural producers who sustained setbacks all around the country because of unfortunate weather conditions and other problems earlier this year.

We had, as the Senate remembers, an amendment in the markup of this bill in this Senate Committee on Appropriations adding about \$4 billion for a wide range of needs in the agricultural sector. I regret, too, we were not able to sustain that provision in negotiations with the House counterparts on the Committee on Appropriations.

We did have difficulty in expanding the provisions beyond the narrow request the President made for funding for the Departments of Defense and State to continue to wage a successful war against terror and to provide needed assistance in the gulf region for further recovery efforts and rebuilding efforts as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Those were the limitations.

The President had threatened to veto the bill if it contained any more than had been requested by the administration for urgent supplemental funding. We were over the barrel, as they say. In negotiations with the House, this is the best we could do.

The conference agreement is the result of a lot of hard work and compromise, as well, between the House and the Senate. The bill provides critically needed funding to our troops and helps continue the recovery as a result of the damages sustained in Hurricane Katrina. The funding level meets the requests of the administration. We will look at the other needs in agriculture and other areas in the regular fiscal year 2007 funding cycle.

We are having hearings now throughout our Committee on Appropriations and the subcommittees that have jurisdiction over these different areas of responsibilities. I am assured we are going to do our best to continue to meet the needs of production agriculture around the country. It is a vital industry. It is the most important industry in my State, surely. More people are involved in agriculture and in processing agricultural commodities than any other economic activity.

I share the Senator's concerns and assure him we will work to identify the needs in his State and around the country as we go through the appropriations process during this next fiscal year. I thank the Senator for his comments.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THUNE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate resume consideration of the pending conference report on Wednesday immediately following morning business. I further ask consent that there be 25 minutes of debate controlled by the chairman and 75 minutes controlled by the ranking member. I further ask consent that following the use or yielding back of time, the conference report be set aside, and further that at 10 o'clock a.m. on Thursday, June 15, the Senate proceed to a vote on the adoption of the conference report to accompany H.R. 4939, the emergency supplemental appropriations bill, with no further intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR ROBERT BYRD

Mr. REED. Mr. President, on Monday, Senator ROBERT BYRD of West Virginia reached an extraordinary milestone: 17,327 days in the United States Senate, almost 48 years. He has cast over 17,000 rollcall votes. His congressional career has spanned the tenure of 10 Presidents, beginning with President Dwight David Eisenhower. In West Virginia, he has run 14 times and never lost.

He has served for over 60 years in both the House and the Senate and other public service. This year he is running for his unprecedented ninth term as a United States Senator from West Virginia. Suffice it to say, he is the longest serving Senator in the history of West Virginia, as he is in the history of the United States. He is the only person in West Virginia to carry every county in the State, all 55. He has run unopposed for the Senate because of the regard, the respect, and, indeed, the affection of the people of West Virginia.

He is 88 years old. He is not slowing down, he has never slowed down, and he will keep it up. As a Member of the Senate, he has been a leader—Democratic whip, majority and minority leader, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and President pro tempore of the Senate on two occasions.

In everything he has done, he has been a champion of the Constitution and the people of West Virginia. He secured billions of dollars in funding for his home State, and he has been a leader on mine safety and other issues that are so closely tied to his constituents.

In May 2001, Senator BYRD was given the award that everyone recognizes is

his due. Gov. Bob Wise and both houses of the West Virginia General Assembly named him "West Virginian of the 20th Century," and he is striving now for the 21st century.

He is an individual who is a self-made man, starting off in war industries in a shipyard, and earning his law degree cum laude from American University while a Member of the United States Congress. He is also someone who recognizes the need for education of others. He created the Robert C. Byrd National Honors Scholarship. This scholarship provides opportunities for young Americans to pursue education as he has pursued his education.

He is a historian—a historian of this Senate and the Roman Senate. In fact, his 3,000-page "History of the United States Senate" is the premier history of this August body. He is a defender, a supporter, and, in some cases, the living embodiment of the United States Constitution. He carries it with him everywhere and every time. He is someone who not only talks about the Constitution, but on the floor of this Senate and in this country defends it each day.

He is an individual of great prominence. He is an individual of great humanity.

There is only one fact, I think, that is dimming this very special occasion for the Senator, and that is, it is not being shared by his beloved wife Erma Ora Byrd. But she is looking on this day with the same satisfaction, the same sense of accomplishment.

It is only fitting to close with a quote from Senator BYRD because I can in no way match his oratorical skills. In September 1998, he addressed the history of the Senate and he said:

Clio being my favorite muse, let me begin this evening with a look backward over the well-traveled roads of history. History always turns our faces backward, and this is as it should be, so that we might be better informed and prepare to exercise wisdom in dealing with future events.

His grasp of the past has given him a wise and insightful view of the future. He has always encouraged us to learn our history and then practice our history to shape the future of this country in this Hall of the Senate.

He has stood tall on so many occasions, but most notably I think was in October 2002. With an iron will and articulate voice, he questioned the policy of this Government as we entered this fight in Iraq.

History, I think, will record his wisdom, his decency, and his contribution to the country. Although I am a day late, I hope I am not a dollar short.

Congratulations to Senator BYRD on his model accomplishment.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I join our colleagues in the accolades and commendation for our colleague, the senior Senator from West Virginia. I believe there is no other Senator who commands the respect and the admiration and the love of fellow Senators as does Senator BYRD.

My first encounter with Senator BYRD, I will never forget. Right over there at that desk, 5½ years ago, I rose to make my maiden speech in the Senate. In the course of that speech to a fairly empty Chamber of the Senate, I happened to mention that it was my maiden speech. In a few moments, suddenly the doors of the Senate flung open and in strode Senator BYRD. He sat down at his desk and listened very politely and patiently as I continued my first oration in this tremendous, most deliberative body. As I finished, Senator BYRD stood and said, "Would the Senator from Florida yield?" I said, of course, "I yield to the distinguished Senator from West Virginia." He proceeded to give a history of the Senate about maiden speeches. He told how, in the old days, when word would get out that a new Senator was going to give his first speech, all of the other Senators would gather around because they wanted to hear what the new Senator was saying. Of course, you can imagine what an impression this made on this new Senator 5½ years ago by not only the conscience of the Senate but the historian of the Senate, the keeper of the rules of the Senate, the distinguished Senator from West Virginia. And, of course, he passed a milestone yesterday. All of us are proud for him, and we are exceptionally proud for this institution, that it would have a Senator such as the distinguished senior Senator from West Virginia.

I want the Senate to know that this Senator is very privileged that he has had the opportunity not only to call him a friend and colleague but that this Senator has had the opportunity to sit at his knee and try to soak up the wisdom of the years, the exceptional historical knowledge of this institution and the extraordinary knowledge of history of planet Earth that the Senator brings to this Chamber.

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise to talk about a significant event that took place yesterday in the U.S. Senate, and that is the fact that we have now a new longest serving U.S. Senator in the history of our country. Senator BYRD nears the end of his eighth term here in the Senate but holding more than just another significant record. His contribution to our country has been almost beyond compare. He already holds Senate records for the most leadership positions held and for the most rollcall votes cast, over 17,600 and still counting.

Starting in 1946, Senator BYRD has run in 14 elections for the West Virginia House of Delegates, the State Senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, and the U.S. Senate. He inspires the envy of all of us because he has won all of these races, and I have no doubt that voters in West Virginia will reelect him to a ninth Senate term this fall. That is going to enable him in December of 2009 to pass the record that Carl Hayden has as the longest serving Member of Congress in United States history. But BOB BYRD is not here